

Sometimes

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by [Bowtiez](#)

Summary

Please read the tags carefully! This work can be considered *triggering* to some viewers! Includes *suicidal thoughts* and *self-harm*! Read at your own risk!

Spider-Man is a good thing. Spider-Man helps people. Spider-Man is a hero.

But...

Not everyone can be saved. *Sometimes* there's nothing Spider-Man can do. And Peter Parker is just a kid.

Or,

Peter's downward spiraling into a world of self-inflicted injury, isolating himself from his loved ones. What happens when Tony Stark finds out his kid has been sitting on a lifetime's worth of guilt at the young age of fifteen? Well, he does everything in his power to help his kid out it.

Notes

Welcome! Wrote this little (long) fic today because I had nothing else to do, and the idea was stuck in my head.

This quite possibly might be the angsty-est thing I've ever written. I just got really into writing it, and couldn't help but be detailed and really tell the story.

Anywho, Peter's really struggling in this one. He's having a hard time, but I swear I love him. I'm sorry I'm so mean to him :(

Just another warning to read the tags before reading this, heavy stuff in here. I spent a great deal of time on multiple mental-health websites and this was created, and I think it's sad, ngl. So, please do enjoy.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Peter Parker was your regular, run of the mill teenager. It's what he told himself. It's what he told his friends. It was what he told strangers. Anyone who would listen, got the same old spiel about boring old Peter Parker.

But he wasn't.

Peter Parker was far from the average teenager. So very far. He wasn't regular at all. He was Spider-Man.

And it was great. He was able to protect people. He could save those in danger, and keep those he kept close to himself safe from anything that could cause them harm. He patrolled the streets of Queens New York because they needed someone like him.

Spider-Man was a hero, and he was looked up to by many. He did what he could to help out those in need, and he did a pretty fine job of it.

But sometimes... sometimes he was too late.

Sometimes, he'd arrive just after a fire had taken down a whole house- a home. Devastatingly, the family pets were not to be seen. The children screaming for their dog, or maybe their cat, and the mom crying as she holds her children close. The father wiping the tears he doesn't want his family to see because they don't have a home, or the memories or photo albums anymore. And they don't even have their pets to make things easier.

Or, sometimes he gets there after a woman had just been sexually attacked in a darkened alley on her way home from her night shift. Assailant nowhere to be seen, leaving the woman crying big ugly tears and gasping for breath, sitting slack against the wall, legs drawn into her chest and face buried in her hands. She pulls her clothes over her exposed body, crying harder when noticing him there, and he can do nothing more than sit across from her and talk her down, trying not to cry himself.

Maybe he'd get there just in time to see a man getting mugged get shot simply because the mugger felt like it, or because the man had put up even the slightest fight. Seeing his body drop, blood gushing and cries silenced as the mugger flees, leaving Peter to drop to his knees beside him to help the man *bleeding out* under his fingers. Knowing he has to help the poor man, but drowning under the flashbacks of uncle Ben leading such a similar fate to the poor soul in front of him. Ultimately watching the life drain from his eyes because help just *couldn't* get there fast enough.

Sometimes it's a car accident he *could've* stopped, had he been just a *minute* earlier. Someone

going just a bit too fast, and the other driver not really looking where they're going. Head-on-head collision that leaves the children in the backseat of one of the cars in critical condition and the adults dead, having died on impact. They leave families behind and the kids, he knows, are in for a lifetime of utter *shit*. Because it's really hard to come back from losing your parents.

Sometimes, it's the little things. Things he sees, that many others don't.

A mother, and two small children sleeping in an ally, fighting for each meal and doing anything she can to feed the young mouths. They're curled together, her arms tight around the little ones, and her sleep restless, ready to spring up at the first signs of danger. Peter can only leave what money he has on him, tucking it carefully into her hand as she rests.

Or, he'd get to a shop just after the robbers had vanished to see no one injured but the register empty. The clerk, heartbeat erratic and scarred for life, but still breathing and safe. Customers flee from the doors, away from what could've very well been a casualty. The day's money gone. But everyone safe. The manager and clerk upset over the loss of some money, but not seeing just how lucky they'd actually been since no one was harmed.

It was a lot to weigh in on him. He was only fifteen years old, and he'd already seen... seen so much in the world. Seen how shitty it is. How it kicks people who are already down, down some more until they can't seem to get back up. He's seen it tear families apart, and steal lives. Break people's spirits, and take wills to live.

It took a toll on Peter. It honestly did.

Because he was just a kid. He had these incredible abilities, and tried to tell himself he was an adult- that he should be an adult, act like one and not let these things affect him. But the truth was, he was a child. And he was scared.

Peter started noticing the little things changing inside himself first. Thoughts- ones he wouldn't act on. Ones that could be deemed bad- *were* bad.

Standing on the edge of a building mid patrol, debating whether or not he could simply step off. Maybe his web-shooters were jammed and wouldn't work, or he couldn't move fast enough to catch himself. Be free from Spider-Man and all the wrong in the world.

But Spider-Man was a good thing. Spider-Man helped people. What would happen if Spider-Man was no more? Who would help the people of Queens who were forgotten or last on the list to be helped?

But it was tempting.

He never did jump, but he thought about it.

Sometimes he'd sit in the old rusty bathtub that was in his apartment. Water filling quickly, almost to the point of sloshing over the edge with just the faintest shift from Peter. They never really used the tub. Since no matter how much they scrubbed it, it was always grimy, and the shower had a better water connection anyways.

With May working the late shift, and he could only pray that she made it home safe, because he's seen how women were treated out there. He'd sink lower and lower, until his nose was barely above the water. He could tilt his head back, let the water consume him completely.

But he couldn't. Not really.

He couldn't do that to May. She didn't deserve that. Not when uncle Ben was already gone. He couldn't leave her alone; he wouldn't. Especially not in the apartment.

So, Peter would wash himself quickly and step out of the by now cooled water, watching with dazed eyes as the water was sucked down the drain. Another thought.

Sometimes Peter thinks about maybe dying in a Spider-Man rescue. A flaming office building, everyone out safe and sound. After rescuing the last person... maybe he goes in for one last sweep of the place, looking for anything and nothing at the same time, just killing time as the flames engulf the place.

A heroic death for Spider-Man; died saving people.

Helping those in need, and losing his own life in the process. It was an easy way out. No one's fault. No one could feel guilty, because it was what Spider-Man did. He put others first, and always got stuck in the crossfire.

But then, then he thinks about May at his funeral. A beautiful black dress and her hair tied back. How she stares, eyes not focusing on anything as others try to console her. He can see her, in his head, spiraling into a deep depression, worse than when they'd lost Ben. Crying over him, because he'd been her child longer than he'd been Richard and Mary's. She'd watched him grow up, and loved and laughed with him for years upon years.

Or, Ned having to go to school without him for the rest of his high school career. He thinks about his best friend crying over him (because he knows Ned would) and about how Ned would build Lego sets anymore, because that was their thing. He and Ned had always built Lego sets together, since that first one way back when they'd just met.

Sometimes he thinks about Mister Stark watching the news. Watching that the vigilante Spider-Man was found dead. Maybe the man cries over the loss of Spider-Man, maybe he doesn't. Peter doesn't know. They couldn't have bonded too much. But he thinks the man would be sad, at least a little. They'd gotten closer since the whole Toomes Vulture thing, but he still doesn't hear from the billionaire very often.

The people would mourn the loss of Spider-Man. The one who always put them first. Protected people, saved things. The one who returned that little kitten who was stuck in that tree that one time- the regular things that made up his legacy.

No one knew. He guarded his secrets, kept it close to himself. He told not a soul. He didn't want to scare anyone. Of course, he didn't. He couldn't. It was his woes to bear.

It was bad enough that he was weighed down by this, he wouldn't, not now, not ever, pass it on to someone else. Certainly not Ned or May. He wouldn't do that to them. And he knows Tony Stark didn't want to hear him whining like a baby. The man was *Iron Man* he'd probably seen shit worse than Peter could imagine.

And who else was there to talk to? A shrink? As Spider-Man? Because Peter Parker couldn't be going to some random therapist's office and explaining his life story to them; how death followed him. How he's watched person after person die. Talk about the fires he runs head first into, or the cars he stops with his bare hands.

They'd think him insane- and maybe he was. But someone needed to do it, because others don't have the abilities that Spider-Man has. So, he'd bear the weight of it, so others could live their lives safe and happy.

The first time Peter had cut himself; it had been an accident.

He'd been making dinner for May, or, was prepping dinner for May. They didn't have much in the fridge. Shopping was expensive, and May was already working long hours for what money they could use for things like food.

Peter managed to find some things to make a stew; beef from the freezer, thawing slowly on the counter, and a selection of old vegetables that were getting to their prime and needed to be used. You didn't waste food when it was so expensive for a single income family.

He'd been dicing an onion, knife skills sloppy because he was a science nerd, not a culinary professional. Something had happened; his hand slipped, or maybe the onion did?

But in the next moment a sharp flash of pain settled along his palm. The knife fell from his fingers, clattering to the counter, and the onion rolled onto its side as soon as Peter's nimble fingers released it.

Blood seeped from the wound, a clear slice along his palm. He stared long and hard at it, blood gushing quickly, steadily dripping into a puddle of velvety red on the laminate floor of the kitchen.

Peter stared, entranced by it all.

He could hear the sound of the blood rolling off his fingers and hitting the growing puddle below; the same soft *drip drip* noise as when the faucet is not completely shut off after use. Filling the heavy silence of the room with the calming repetitive noise.

This was... *different*.

It wasn't like being injured as Spider-Man. It wasn't like anything he'd felt before.

In this moment, Peter wasn't thinking about his family or friends. He wasn't thinking of those he'd let down, now traumatized or maybe even dead. Just... the blood.

The way it dripped. The calmness of the sound. His mind followed the continuous *drip, drip, drip*.

The tension in his body flowed out with each little drip. It was relieving, and dare he say nice. The things he'd been holding on to since he first became Spider-Man; since the first life he'd failed to save. Everything was easing away.

And it didn't even hurt. Not at all. His hand was numb, and his mind as well. No pain, just calmness.

He stared long and hard.

He didn't know for how long; he hadn't the slightest idea. A minute, an hour; maybe even two?

Watching as the dripping slowed. As his skin slowly started mending back together, tugging its self painfully back together as it once was.

Blood covered his hand, but by the end of it, not a mark was left to be seen on his once wounded hand. A miracle. Truly.

He snapped from his daze, eyes shifting to the impressive puddle of blood. Then to the clock on the stove top. May would be home soon.

Peter washed his hands, studying over his blemish free hand as the evidence of his recent pastime

washed down the drain with the water. He cleaned up the blood on the floor with a cloth, soaking it under steaming water and then wringing it out until it was no longer stained in dark reds, then he proceeded to toss it in the laundry basket to be washed.

“Hey, May,” Peter called as the door clicked unlocked and his aunt stepped in, looking as exhausted as ever. She managed a small smile to her nephew, and Peter continued, “I was just starting on dinner. I’m trying to make stew.”

It should probably be worrying to Peter just how quickly he could strap on a figurative mask of okay-ness. Flash a small, toothy smile and have the people closest to him completely fooled.

As it turned out, Peter’s self-inflicted injury hadn’t really been a one-time thing.

There was just something about the sharp sting of an injury fading off to a cool numbness. Having complete control over how deep he cut, or how long the lines were. How many, how close together or where on his body.

Having something take over his focus. Distract him from everything; from school, to Flash berating him, to Spider-Man to the thoughts of everything he’d ever done wrong and everyone he’s failed in his life.

It was a way to de-stress, and frankly the only thing Peter felt like he had control over. He couldn’t control whether Spider-Man would get shot, or the innocent woman on Jackson Ave would get stabbed.

But he could control the seven slices leading down his forearm.

And then, as if magic; they were gone. Hours later the evidence of giving up and allowing himself to self-destruct were gone. A new blank canvas ready to repeat his actions.

Turned out Spider-Man could help him as well. No one knew anything. The scars were healed up quickly, before anyone even had the chance to see. And, it’s not like anyone would notice them from under the sweaters he usually wore, and the Spider-Man suit covered everything easily.

He could fake a positive attitude. Fake being happy-go-lucky Spider-Man and only really let himself downward spiral when he was alone. No one noticed, and if they did, no one mentioned it.

Plus, depending on the time of day, there wasn’t any proof of anything.

There weren’t scars. He didn’t appear sad, or depressed or, hell, he’d never looked like the kind of kid to be standing on a high ledge stories and stories up from the safety of the ground. But he was, and it hurt, and there was just so much going on in his mind.

Every face of every victim he hadn’t managed to get to in time.

Names of those he’d failed.

Crimes he just couldn’t stop.

Things Spider-Man had to deal with, and it was just the normal at this point. He accepted this. Because it came with the job. It would be in the literal job description, had there been one.

Peter would definitely put it there if he were writing one for Spider-Man.

“Sweetie,” Peter looked up from his pile of homework; everything from precalculus to advanced physics, all pushed aside to be out helping people. “There’s this conference in Boston, it’ll be really good for me to attend. Looks good on me to the company, and I can add it to my resume. I need it to even qualify for that new position I’m looking into.”

“Okay?” Peter tilted his head, “so you’re going?”

“The thing is... it’s a weeklong event. I can’t... I don’t feel right leaving you home by yourself for a week, Spider-Man or not-”

“I’ll be fine, May,” Peter smiled, pencil tapping a random pattern on the lined loose-leaf in front of him.

“Well, I talked to Tony Stark, and he said he’d be willing to look after you, at the tower. Said something about you dodging his calls and needing to upgrade your suit anyways.”

Ah, yes. He had been. Avoiding everyone actually, not just Mister Stark.

He’d hole himself away from May, barely joining her for meals- or slipping in through the window hours later than he was supposed to be out because her job left her just so exhausted. She was just so busy with work and trying to get a decent amount of sleep that she didn’t really notice- at least as far as he could tell.

He’d read Ned’s texts, but not usually respond. Sometimes he’d join his friend for lunch in the cafeteria, but not very often. Too many faces. He’d flee classrooms quickly, on the off chance that one of his friends (the whole two of them, that if you could even count MJ as a friend) would want him to hang out or walk to their next class together.

And Mister Stark, probably worst of all, had been calling him. Calling his suit, calling his cell. Sending him texts, which Peter was quite sure the man didn’t usually do. The billionaire was reaching out, and just like Ned’s, the teen would leave him on read.

Hell, he’d even dodged Happy’s car in Midtown’s parking lot a couple times. Sneaking back into the school when noticing it and leaving out a side or back door, easily jumping the fence around the school’s perimeter.

“No,” Peter said quickly, “I’m fine May. You don’t have to do that to Tony. I’m fifteen, I can stay home alone for a week.”

“Exactly,” May tilted her head, arms crossing over her chest, “*fifteen*. I’m sorry, Peter, but you’re still a kid. And I know you, I know how much you Spider-Man. What if something happens to you?”

“But-”

“*I’d* feel better if you were with him.”

And all fight left Peter. If it would ease May’s mind, then he’d do it.

“Has Mister Stark done something wrong?” May asked carefully, “is there a reason you don’t want to go? When you first met him, you would’ve done anything to spend a week at the Tower with him.”

“No, uh, no.” Peter shook his head, pencil falling from his numb fingers, “nothing like that, he’s been. It’s good. He’s good. It’s... it’s okay. Sounds fun. Guess I’ve been busy recently and forgot to

answer his calls.”

May seemed convinced by the smile Peter spared her, before picking up his pencil and attempting to put his focus back on his assload of homework.

That following Monday afternoon, Peter sighed heavily as he stalked out of the school. The day had been long- homework he hadn't known he had had been due. Flash had been especially cruel, mocking and belittling him, and the only thing he really wanted to do was lock himself in his bedroom and de-stress in the only way he'd found to work.

But that couldn't happen, not today at least. He trailed his way slowly to the shiny, black Audi parked front and center, demanding attention.

He pulled the door open, masking his emotions and smiling easily at Happy.

“Hey, Happy!”

“Boss has been trying to reach you,” the man said instead of a greeting. Peter slumped back against the seat for a second, dropping his bag at his feet and shutting the door behind himself.

“Oh, has he?” Peter feigned surprise, “I've been super busy with... y'know school and stuff.”

“Hn,” the man huffed, turning his attention to the road and pulling out swiftly. Conversation was a no-go. Peter didn't try to talk to the man, and Happy didn't even so much as spare a look in Peter's direction.

When they arrived at the Tower, Peter pulled his backpack straps over his shoulders, flashing the man another grin and thanking him for taking the time to drive him to the Tower.

It was quiet inside, and he only found out when he reached the penthouse, and Friday informed him that Mister Stark was on an Avenger's mission with the team- or, what was left of it.

He'd been to the tower enough to know his way around. His way to the bedroom Mister Stark had deemed to be his whenever he was visiting and the accompanying bathroom. Friday knew his voice, and he had access to just about everywhere in the Tower.

He staying in his room for a while, there was nothing better to be doing after all.

When dinner time rolled around, the teenager snuck into the kitchen. It was still weird being in the billionaire's home without him, but he couldn't really change anything. The sneaking was pointless, but Peter still felt the need to do it.

The fridge was stocked full, just like it usually was. He pulled out some eggs and found bread on the counter. It was the easiest thing to make, and only took like ten minutes. Plus, who didn't like breakfast for dinner every once in a while?

Eggs were something Peter was actually pretty decent at making. He'd had years of Mother's Days where he made May breakfast in bed (sometimes with Ben's help) and his eggs had gradually improved over time.

He got the eggs started in a pan, heat maybe a bit higher than it should be, but it didn't matter. Whatever cooked the eggs.

The billionaire had a fancy toaster; four slots and like ten different settings for things like how dark he'd want his toast and how long the timers could be set for. He randomly set it somewhere in the middle, hoping for a good outcome, but knowing he'd eat it either way.

He wasn't sure what came over him.

Maybe the need to feel in control in his settings, or maybe something else.

In the cutlery drawer, instead of grabbing a butter knife to butter his toast, the teen selected a steak knife- probably sharper than everything he and May had in their little kitchen.

The shine on the knife was pleasing. He slid his finger along the sharp edge of the metal, humming a pleased sound at the dull sting. He didn't break skin, just felt the burn of the metal threatening to pierce him.

He did use the knife as he wanted too, to butter his toast.

If anyone asked, how he cut his hand, he'd say it was an accident. Fingers slipped. Toast slipped. Maybe the knife slipped, and he hadn't even *realized* he was using a steak knife to butter his toast- because who would do that?

But... he wasn't really sure if it had been an accident or...

"Peter?" the boy spun, looking up from his bloodied hand with wide eyes.

It was his fingers this time. A steady line along all four of the fingers on his left hand, instead of across his palm. Almost like the first time, but not at the same time.

His toast lay forgotten on the place and the eggs probably burning in the pan as he stared at the billionaire. Tony was stood frozen, eyes trailing all around the room; from the near flaming eggs on the stovetop, to the piece of toast on the floor, soaking up the stream of blood from Peter's fingers.

A knife was clutched in the teenager's hands, but it dropped from his hold and dropped to the floor in a near silence-shattering clatter.

Peter's hands were bloodied, both of them, and a clear cut was running along the fingers on his left.

"Jesus, Pete," Tony gaped, springing into action. He grabbed the tea towel that was hanging on the stove- something Pepper like to do when she was around, wrapping it around the boy's bleeding fingers. "What the hell happened?" The man continued to switch the stove top off, then slid the pan off the hot element just to be safe.

"Knife slipped," Peter muttered, as if it explained everything. "Sorry."

"Why were you using a-" Tony looked down at the knife lying beside the puddle of blood on the floor, "steak knife to butter your toast, Bud?"

"Was I?" Tony really didn't like how dully dissociative the teenager's eyes looked as they slowly trailed from the blood on the floor to where he'd been holding the tea towel to his wound. He appeared to sober up, gaze snapping to Tony's, "oh, gosh! I'm so sorry, Mister Stark!"

Peter's eyes shifted from the man to trail the room, cheeks flushing at how he'd practically destroyed the kitchen.

“No, it’s fine,” Tony was quick to reply, reaching to pull the tea towel away enough to see the cuts along the teenager’s fingers, “Christ, Kid. I think you might need stitches.”

“No, uh,” Peter flushed again, “it’s alright. The spider healing, it, uh, mends me together really quickly. Not worth getting stitches over.”

“And you... you know this because?” the billionaire raised an eyebrow at the boy.

Peter shrugged, disinterestedly muttering a soft ‘Spider-Man’.

“Right,” the man swallowed. Peter’s fingers were already clotting so stitches would be pretty useless at this point.

Tony wasn’t sure how to be handling this. What even *was* this? Who uses a sharp knife to butter their toast? Peter was a smart boy, and this just... it wasn’t adding up. This definitely wasn’t how he’d wanted to spend the first evening Peter was at the Tower with him.

“Are... are you alright?” Tony asked finally. Peter was pale, his eyes glazed over and the boy was barely focusing. His hands were wringing the towel aimlessly; fidgeting and Tony had half a mind to take it away before he disturbed the clotting cells.

“Hmm?” Peter shook himself from his stupor, glancing at the billionaire, “oh, uh, yeah. I’m good.”

“Okay... good, good.” Tony eyed the room. “Why don’t you go change into some pajamas and I’ll order some food. Chinese good?”

“Sure, Mister Stark,” Peter flashed a smile. And then, the billionaire noticed, as if he’d been slapped across the face, that Peter was *back*. His wide observant eyes, once again bright and calculating. Peter’s smile was beaming, and he was moving like he hadn’t just been dazed and bleeding out in his kitchen.

And it threw Tony for a loop. Because what the *hell* had just happened?

It was the third day of staying with Mister Stark that a sobbing Peter crawled his way into his bedroom window at Stark Tower. He’d been out on patrol, since the last bell of the school day had sounded.

His night had been mostly uneventful. An attempted mugging (he got there in time to stop them), an almost car accident (he helped solve the bickering) and another cat stuck in a tree (figures). Then there had been the regular bicycle stealing stoppings, stopping a man from stealing a car and helping a little old lady cross a couple streets (and carrying her bags back to her apartment for her; she was a great conversationalist).

Then it had gone wrong. Terribly wrong.

He was about to head back to the tower. Curfew was fast approaching, and he really didn’t want to piss off Iron Man.

An officer making an arrest caught Peter’s attention. He stilled on the rooftop. The teen thought faintly of his uncle, who had also been an officer. He smiled at the thought.

The man on his knees, hands behind his head was grimy. His hair was scruffy and he had a beard that was greying.

The police man, young- probably just out of the academy, turned his back to get something from his squad car and before Peter could blink, a shot rang out.

The crook, grinning, had a gun in his hand, that he'd silently slipped from the front of his dirtied jeans, cocked towards the officer.

Peter cried out, jumping down as the man shuffled to his feet and took off. There would be a bounty on his head now, since squad cars have cameras. Peter had better things to be doing then chasing that asshole right now.

Peter watched as the cop dropped; first to his knees, then he flopped onto his side, fingers shakily reaching to grasp at the bleeding hole in his abdomen, millimeters below where his bullet-proof vest ended.

Peter dropped beside the man. He was bleeding quickly, more blood then Peter had seen in ages. He cried out, ripping the mask off. Peter could only see uncle Ben.

This was an officer, just like uncle Ben. An officer losing his life in his line of work. Protecting his streets. *Oh God.*

"Y-you're just a kid," the man gasped.

"S-s-so are you," Peter cried. This man was only a few years older than him, tops.

"It's alright, Spider-Man," the officer smiled, "I knew what I was doing when I s-signed up."

"No, no! It's okay, you'll be okay!"

"I w-won't," the man managed a small smile. "Sh, it's alright, Kid."

The man's eyes fluttered shut, and all Peter could think about was Ben. Ben's eyes closing. Ben dying. Just like this man was dying. Right before his eyes. *Again.*

Peter bit his tongue, staring down at the lifeless body.

"You should've searched him!" Peter cried to the body, shakily stumbling to his feet, "you could've lived!"

And then Peter took off, leaving the body as the sound of sirens filled the eerie silence of New York.

The next thing Peter knew he was falling in his window at the Tower. He didn't know what time it was. He didn't know where he really was. And he could barely remember where he was staying- whose house was this?

Peter let out a shuttered sob, dropping to his knees and curling into a ball when he hit the floor.

He was numb.

So unbelievably numb.

So numb, it hurt.

Uncle Ben's death played on repeat in his mind. Over and over again he watched his uncle shot- stumbling to the ground and *dying*. Over and over and over.

Peter crawled to his bag; inside he had a razor. He didn't shave or anything, but he felt better having it. He broke it, snapped it like a cracker in his fist.

He needed something to bring him back. Something to neutralize him. He needed to *feel* something. Tears streamed down his face as he sliced over the Spider-Man suit. Cut after cut, simply to feel something other than guilt.

Tony had been finishing up in the lab when Friday had informed him that Peter had arrived back at the Tower. It was a little later than he was expecting the kid, but crime was unpredictable.

He stood to go find the boy, maybe they could order some food or something- watch a movie. He moved slowly through his house, knowing Peter would be in his bedroom.

"Boss, it appears Mister Parker is in distress." Friday called; voice sounded as panicked as an Artificial Intelligence could. "Mister Parker has six lacerations on his arm- seven- eight-"

What the fuck?!

The man sprinted, down the hall; faster than he knew he could move. In a swift motion, he threw Peter's bedroom door open.

The sight to greet him was one he was sure he was never going to forget. Peter crying; sobbing heavily. His arm and hands covered in blood- *his own blood*.

His hands were slack at his sides, but the billionaire could see a familiar glint of silvery metal in his hand, as well as the demolished pieces of a razor discarded on the floor.

He dove towards the teen, wrestling the razor blade for Peter's hand and pulling the teen into a tight hug when he'd managed to toss the piece of metal somewhere in the room.

"Peter, shh," Tony whispered, though he was pretty close to crying himself, "you're okay, please. You're alright." Peter was not alright, but the billionaire didn't know where to go from here. How do you help someone like this? Someone who's clearly suffering.

Peter continued to sob, but his arms lifted to grab fistfuls of Tony's workshop t-shirt, hold on to the man just as tight as the billionaire's around himself. Peter buried his face in the billionaire's collar bone, eyes squeezed shut.

"W-what happened, Kid?" Tony begged, lifting a hand to brush through Peter's hair.

"I couldn't save him," Peter sobbed. And it was heartbreaking. The teen in his arms was shaking like a leaf, and his breath erratic- or when he *did* breathe it was erratic.

Tony was so far out of his comfort zone. He'd have given up his millions for May to be here, or, hell, even Pepper. Because he didn't know *how* to help the boy.

"Who, Pete? Who couldn't you save?"

"So many people," Peter cried out, "I let them die, Tony!"

Tony too squeezed his eyes shut. Just letting the boy cry. He refused to let him go, or loosen his hold until Peter did it first. All he could do right now was hug the boy, and make him feel safe.

It felt like hours before Peter started calming down. His breath was finally starting to even out, and

his shaking had lessened significantly. He was no longer bleed, and his skin was mending together each second that they sat together, spotted with Peter's blood and stiff and sore from the hardness of the teen's bedroom floor.

Peter started to pull back, and Tony was quick to follow, letting the boy have his space.

"I'm sorry," Peter whispered. "I-I didn't mean for this too- for you too- this is a mess."

"Literally or figuratively?" the billionaire questioned without thinking. He opened his mouth to apologize, because that was a little insensitive, but Peter laughed before he could.

"Both, I guess."

"Let's... let's get the literal mess cleaned up, and then... maybe we can talk about the figurative?" Tony suggested, trekking carefully into unknown territory. Peter gave him a small nod, which he took as a good sign.

Together they cleaned up Peter's room. The man locating and disposing of the razor blade, as well as the rest of the destroyed razor. Tony then cleaned up Peter's arms, carefully wiping the dried blood away and wiping the healing wounds with disinfectant because razors were nasty and germ infested.

"I'm going to get changed, you should too... then, we could, I don't know, maybe talk? Or somethin'?" Tony suggested, hands buried in his cargo pants pockets.

"Sounds good," Peter agreed with a light uncertain smile. They were both in uncharted territory apparently.

When Peter arrived in the living room, Tony was already there. The man was staring straight ahead, eyes focused on the wall. Tony's foot tapped aimlessly on the floor; his other foot tucked under his ass. Peter didn't say anything as he hesitantly sat beside the billionaire, unsure of literally everything at this point.

"So... how long have you been... with the... you know..." the man's nose curled up, and Peter knew what he was talking about.

The teen bit his lip, eyes blinking shut as he answered, "since a little after Homecoming."

"So, in the kitchen, when you first got here. Was that... you know, an actual accident, or, or--"

"I don't... I don't really know, Mister Stark."

Tony nodded, swallowing hard, "okay."

"It was an accident the first time," Peter said, bristling at how easily he's spilled the information, "it was just... I don't know. Something to focus on. Something I could control, and something that could ease my mind- and I, well, I almost *forget*, Mister Stark, there's something *else* to be thinking about when I cut myself."

"What else do you focus on?"

"Death," Peter spoke without thinking. One look at the billionaire's face had the teen backpedaling though, "I mean, other people. Not, not death for me. People I've... you know, let down. T-those who trusted Spider-Man and I let them down."

“People you’ve failed?” Tony asked slowly, raising an eyebrow, “like who?”

“Uncle Ben,” the boy whispered, “the homeless man who got mugged, the lady who was sexually assaulted, the fire that killed a whole family- three kids, many, many car accident victims, t-the police officer who, who died tonight and-”

“Peter, you can’t save everyone.” Tony interrupted, voice a soft whisper. He reached over to settle what he hoped was a calming hand on the teen’s knee, “you can’t. I should know, Bud, I’ve tried, and you... you just *can’t*.”

“I could have done better. I could have— t-they didn’t have to die. The officer tonight, he, he forgot to search the man, Tony. He, he was just a bit older than me, and he, he died.”

“But what about everyone you’ve saved?” Tony asked carefully, not wanting to set the boy off again, “those people who get to go home to their families because you stepped in. People who would have died if you hadn’t have helped. Peter, you’re only a kid, the world isn’t in your hands. You can’t save every single person in danger- it’s... there’s just too many.”

“I’ve watched people die. People look at me like I could magically fix them, or worse, when they know they’re dying and they, they just don’t want to be alone. It, it sucks, Mister Stark.”

“It does,” the billionaire said with a soft laugh. “It really sucks, but you *can’t* change it. You just have to, you know, try your best. That’s all people ask of you. That’s all I ask of you, Kiddo.”

“Yeah... try my best.” Peter repeated, voice sad. The billionaire put his arm over the back of the couch, and the kid took it as an invitation to curl into his side (it really was). Peter tucked his body into Tony’s side, breathing in the billionaire expensive laundry detergent.

“Have you... considered talking to someone?” Tony asked quietly. His finger had taken to carding through Peter’s hair, and Peter seemed to be enjoying it.

“Do you know how fast I’d get bounced into a loony bin if I talked to someone,” Peter gave a small sarcastic laugh. His eyes shifted downwards.

“I’ll take that as a deeply thought out yes,” Tony snorted, “you know, Kiddo, there’s this thing called an NDA- or a non-disclosure agreement. And if someone blabs after signing it, you can sue for the big bucks.”

“Yeah, but who’ll sign that?”

“I can find someone.” Tony spoke confidently, “you need to talk to someone.”

“I’m talking to you,” Peter tilted his head at the man.

“Yeah, I don’t count.” Tony laughed, “someone who can, you know, help you. I can only listen and pay for what you need, Kid. And I will. Anything, Bud, anything you need. I’ll get it for you.”

“Okay, okay,” Peter returned the laugh, snuggling closer.

“So, if I found a therapist, got them to sign an NDA, you’d actually talk to them?”

“I mean... yeah, I guess? Unless they start being weird.”

“Perfect, tomorrow; noon. I’ll call you in sick at school tomorrow for the day.”

“T-tomorrow?” Peter choked on his own spit, “what the hell?”

“Pff, you think, me, Iron Man, guy who was kidnapped and held captive for months, who flew into a wormhole with a missile set to destroy all of New York on his back, doesn’t talk to a shrink?” Tony huffed a laugh, “you’re funny Kiddo. I’m all kinds of fucked up.”

“Y-you see a therapist?” Peter asked meekly.

“Yep. Nothing to be ashamed of. Everyone needs a little help every once in a while. Now, the guy's real nice. I like him. Let’s you take your time opening up and stuff, doesn't really care if you stop talking about things when you get too uncomfortable- granted the whole ordeal’s uncomfortable. But he’s the best in the business, if I do say.”

Peter was silent, thinking everything over. He was a smidge scared to put that kind of trust into a stranger.

“He’s been my therapist for like a decade, he won’t spill your Spider-Man beans. I promise. I mean, he could’ve been rich if he spilled my shit to the tabloids, so you’re safe.”

“Okay,” Peter agreed, blowing out a breath. “I trust you.”

“Good.” Tony blinked, a small smile lighting up his face, “that’s all I can really ask for, eh?”

“*Sometimes* you’ve gotta put your trust in someone,” Peter explained, letting his head fall back against the billionaire.

“*Sometimes* you can’t do it on your own,” Tony said with a smile, arm wrapping around his kid.

“Now, how about a movie, and I’m feeling pizza. How ‘bout you?”

End Notes

Hi again! Glad you made it to the end!

Comments would be great, let me know if I missed a tag or something. Also, let me know how I did! I love each and every comment; from opinions, to thoughts, to constructive criticism! All greatly appreciated! As are Kudos and seeing people subscribe and bookmark!

Thanks to everyone who does, it means alot and keeps me motivated :D

Thanks for reading! I hope you enjoyed. Maybe I'll see you on another fic sometime soon!

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